

# O. Henry Stories

## X—Helping the Other Fellow.

By O. HENRY

[Copyright by Frank A. Munsey Co.]  
But can't help others help themselves?—Mulaney.



THIS is the story that William Trotter told me on the beach at Aguas Frescas while I waited for the gig of the captain of the fruit steamer Andador, which was to take me aboard. Reluctantly I was leaving the Land of Always Afternoon. William was remaining, and he favored me with a condensed oral autobiography as we sat on the sands in the shade cast by the Bodega Nacional.

As usual, I became aware that the Man from Bombay had already written the story, but as he had compressed it to an eight word sentence I have become an expansionist and have quoted his phrase above with apologies to him and best regards to Terence.

"Don't you ever have a desire to go back to the land of derby hats and starched collars?" I asked him. "You seem to be a handy man and a man of action," I continued, "and I am sure I could find you a comfortable job somewhere in the States."

Ragged, shiftless, barefooted, a confirmed eater of the lotos, William Trotter had pleased me much, and I hated to see him gobbled up by the tropics.

"I've no doubt you could," he said, idly splitting the bark from a section of sugar cane. "I've no doubt you could do much for me. If every man could do as much for himself as he can for others every country in the world would be holding millenniums instead of centennials."

There seemed to be pabulum in W. T.'s words. And then another idea came to me.

I had a brother in Chicopee Falls who owned manufactories—cotton or sugar or AA sheetings or something in the commercial line. He was vulgarly rich, and therefore revered. The artistic temperament of the family was monopolized at my birth. I knew that Brother James would honor my slightest wish. I would demand from him a position in cotton or sugar or sheetings for William Trotter—something, say, at \$200 a month or thereabouts. I confided my beliefs and made my propositions to William. He had pleased me much, and he was ragged.

While we were talking there was a sound of firing guns—four or five, rattling, as if by a squad. The cheerful noise came from the direction of the cuartel, which is a kind of makeshift barracks for the soldiers of the republic.

"Hear that?" said William Trotter. "Let me tell you about it."

"A year ago I landed on this coast with one solitary dollar. I have the same sum in my pocket today. I was second cook on a tramp frigate, and they marooned me here early one morning without benefit of clergy just because I poulticed the face of the first mate with a cheese omelet at dinner. The fellow had kicked because I'd put horseshoe in it instead of cheese."

"When they threw me out of the yawl into three feet of surf I waded ashore and sat down under a palm tree. By and by a fine looking white man with a red face and white clothes, genteel as possible, but somewhat under the influence, came and sat down beside me."

"I had noticed there was a kind of a village back of the beach, and enough scenery to outfit a dozen moving picture shows. But I thought, of course, it was a cannibal suburb, and I was wondering whether I was to be served with carrots or mushrooms. And, as I say, this dressed up man sits beside me, and we become friends in the space of a minute or two. For an hour we talked, and he told me all about it."

"It seems that he was a man of parts, conscientiousness and plausibility, besides being educated and a wreck to his appetites. He told me all about it. Colleges had turned him out and distilleries had taken him in. Did I tell you his name? It was Clifford Wainwright. I didn't exactly catch the cause of his being cast away on that particular stretch of South America, but I reckon it was his own business. I asked him if he'd ever been second cook on a tramp frigate, and he said no; so that concluded my line of surmises. But he talked like the encyclopedia from 'A—Berlin' to 'Trilo—Zyria.' And he carried a watch—a silver arrangement with works, and up to date within twenty-four hours, anyhow."

"I'm pleased to have met you," says Wainwright. "I'm a devotee to the great Joss Boozie, but my ruminating facilities are unimpaired," says he, or words to that effect. "And I hate, says he, 'to see fools trying to run the world.'"

"I never touch a drop," says I, "and there are many kinds of fools, and the world runs on its own apex, according to science, with no meddling from me."

"I was referring," says he, "to the president of this republic. His country is in a desperate condition. Its treasury is empty, it's on the verge of war with Nicaragua, and if it wasn't for the hot weather the people would be starting revolutions in every town. Here is a nation," goes on Wainwright, "on the brink of destruction. A man of intelligence could rescue it from its impending doom in one day by issuing the necessary edicts and orders. President Gomez knows nothing of statesmanship or policy. Do you know Adam Smith?"

"Lemme see," says I. "There was a one eyed man named Smith in Fort Worth, Tex., but I think his first name was—"

"I am referring to the political economist," says Wainwright. "S'mother Smith, then," says I. "The one I speak of never was arrested."

"So Wainwright boils some more with indignation at the insensibility of people who are not corpulent to fill public positions, and then he tells me he is going out to the president's summer palace, which is four miles from Aguas Frescas, to instruct him in the art of running steam heated republics."

"Come along with me, Trotter," says he, "and I'll show you what brains can do."

"Anything in it?" I ask. "The satisfaction," says he, "of redeeming a country of 200,000 population from ruin back to prosperity and peace."

"Great," says I. "I'll go with you. I'd prefer to eat a live broiled lobster just now, but give me liberty as second choice if I can't be in at the death."

"Wainwright and me permeates through the town, and he halts at a rum dispensary."

"Have you any money?" he asks. "I have," says I, fishing out my silver dollar. "I always go about with adequate sums of money."

"Then we'll drink," says Wainwright.

"Not me," says I. "Not any demon rum or any of its ramifications for mine. It's one of my non-weaknesses."

"It's my falling," says he. "What's your particular soft point?"

"Industry," says I promptly. "I'm hardworking, diligent, industrious and energetic."

"My dear Mr. Trotter," says he, "surely I've known you long enough to tell you you are a liar. Every man must have his own particular weakness and his own particular strength in other things. Now you will buy me a drink of rum, and we will call on President Gomez."

"Well, sir," Trotter went on, "we walks the four miles out, through a virgin conservatory of palms and ferns and other roof garden products, to the president's summer White House. It was blue and reminded you of what you see on the stage in the third act, which they describe as 'same as the first' on the programs."

"There was more than fifty people waiting outside the iron fence that surrounded the house and grounds. There were generals, agitators and epergues in gold lace uniforms and citizens in diamonds and panama hats, all waiting to get an audience with the royal five card draw. And in a kind of a summer house in front of the mansion we could see a burned sienna man eating breakfast out of gold dishes and taking his time. I judged that the crowd outside had come out for their morning orders and requests and was afraid to intrude."

"But C. Wainwright wasn't. The gate was open, and he walked inside and up to the president's table as confident as a man who knows the head waiter in a fifteen cent restaurant. And I went with him because I had only 75 cents, and there was nothing else to do."

"The Gomez man rises from his chair and looks, colored man as he was, like he was about to call out for corporal of the guard, post No. 1. But Wainwright says some phrases to him in a peculiarly lubricating manner, and the first thing you know we was all three of us seated at the table, with coffee and rolls and iguana cutlets coming as fast as about ninety peones could rustle 'em."

"And then Wainwright begins to talk, but the president interrupts him."

"You Yankees," says he, polite, "assuredly take the cake for assurance, I assure you," or words to that effect. He spoke English better than you or me. "You've had a long walk," says he, "but it's nicer in the cool morning to walk than to ride. May I suggest some refreshments?" says he.

"Rum," says Wainwright.

"Gimme a cigar," says I.

"Well, sir, the two talked an hour, keeping the generals and equities all in their gold uniforms waiting outside the fence, and while I smoked, silent, I listened to Clifford Wainwright making a solid republic out of the wreck of one. I didn't follow his arguments with any special collocation of international intelligibility, but he had Mr. Gomez's attention glued and riveted. He takes out a pencil and marks the white linen tablecloth all over with figures and estimates and deductions. He speaks more or less disrespectfully of import and export duties and custom house receipts and taxes and treaties and budgets and concessions and such truck that politics and government require, and when he gets through the Gomez man hops up and

shakes his hand and says he's saved the country and the people.

"You shall be rewarded," says the president.

"Might I suggest another rum?" says Wainwright.

"Cigar for me—darker brand," says I.

"Well, sir, the president sent me and Wainwright back to the town in a victoria hitched to two flea bitten selling platers—but the best the country afforded."

"I found out afterward that Wainwright was a regular beach comber, the smartest man on the whole coast, but kept down by rum. I liked him."

"One day I inveigled him into a walk out a couple of miles from the village, where there was an old grass hut on the bank of a little river. While he was sitting on the

grass, talking beautiful of the wisdom of the world that he had learned in books, I took hold of him easy and tied his hands and feet together with leather things that I had in my pocket."

"Lie still," says I, "and meditate on the exigencies and irregularities of life till I get back."

"I went to a shack in Aguas Frescas, where a mighty wise girl named Timotea Carrizo lived with her mother. The girl was just about as nice as you ever saw. In the States she would have been called a brunette, but she was better than brunettes—I should say she was what you might term an ecru shade. I knew her pretty well. I told her about my friend Wainwright. She gave me a double handful of bark—calisaya, I think it was—and some more herbs that I was to mix with it and told me what to do. I was to make tea of it and give it to him and keep him from rum for a certain time. And for two weeks I did it. You know, I liked Wainwright. Both of us was broke, but Timotea sent us goat meat and plantains and tortillas every day, and at last I got the curse of drink lifted from Clifford Wainwright. He lost his taste for it. And in the cool of the evening him and me would sit on the roof of Timotea's mother's hut, eating harmless truck like coffee and rice and stewed crabs and playing the accordion."

"About that time President Gomez found out that the advice of C. Wainwright was the stuff he had been looking for. The country was pulling out of debt, and the treasury had enough boodle in it for him to amuse himself occasionally with the night latch."

"So down from the regular capital he sends for Clifford Wainwright and makes him his private secretary at 20,000 Peru dollars a year. Yes, sir—so much. Wainwright was on the water wagon—thanks to me and Timotea—and he was soon in clover with the government gang."

"As I said, a man can do a lot more for another party than he can for himself. Wainwright with his brains got a whole country out of trouble and on its feet, but what could he do for himself? And without any special brains, but with some nerve and common sense, I put him on his feet because I never had the weakness that he did—nothing but a cigar for mine. Yes, he offered me some pretty good."

"Easy."

"Your wife needs rides in the open air."

"All right, doc. I'll drop word among the real estate agents that I might look at property in the suburbs."

—Louisville Courier-Journal.

**PATIENT WORK.**

There is no great achievement which is not the result of patient working and waiting.—Timothy Titcomb.

When I arrived at the Crescent City I hurried away—far away from the St. Charles to a dim chambre garnie in Bienville street—and there, looking down from my attic window from time to time at the old, yellow absinthe house across the street, I wrote this story to buy my bread and butter.

"Can't think that helps others help themselves?"

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"I think she went back with her mother," said Trotter, "to the village in the mountains that they come from. Tell me, what would this job you speak of pay?"

"Why," said I, hesitating over commerce, "I should say \$50 or \$100 a month, maybe \$200."

"Ain't it funny," said Trotter, digging his toes in the sand, "what a chump a man is when it comes to paddling his own canoe? I don't know. Of course I'm not making a living here. I'm on the bum. But—well, I wish you could have seen that Timotea. Every man has his own weak spot."

The gig from the Andador was coming ashore to take out the captain, purser and myself, the lone passenger.

"I'll guarantee," said I confidently, "that my brother will pay you \$75 a month."

"All right, then," said William Trotter. "Till—"

But a soft voice called across the blazing sands. A girl, faintly lemon tinted, stood in Calle Real and called.

"It's her!" said William Trotter, looking. "She's come back! I'm obliged, but I can't take the job. Thanks, just the same. Aint it funny how we can't do nothing for ourselves, but we can do wonders for the other fellow? You was about to get me with your financial proposition, but we've all got our weak points. Timotea's mine. And, say—"

Trotter had turned to leave, but he retraced the step or two that he had taken. "I like to have left you without saying goodby," said he. "It kind of rattles you when they go away unexpected for a month and come back the same way. Shake hands. So long! Say, do you remember them gun shots we heard awhile ago up at the cuartel? Well, I knew what they was, but I didn't mention it. It was Clifford Wainwright being shot by a squad of soldiers against a stone wall for giving away secrets of state to that Nicaragua republic. Oh, yes, it was rum that did it. He backslid and got his. I guess we all have our weak points and can't do much toward helping ourselves. Mine's waiting for me. I'd have liked to have that job with your brother, but—we've all got our weak points. So long!"

A big black Carib carried me on his back through the surf to the ship's boat. On the way the purser handed me a letter that he had brought for me at the last moment from the post office in Aguas Frescas. It was from my brother. He requested me to meet him at the St. Charles hotel in New Orleans and accept a position with his house—in either cotton, sugar or sheetings, and with \$5,000 a year as my salary.

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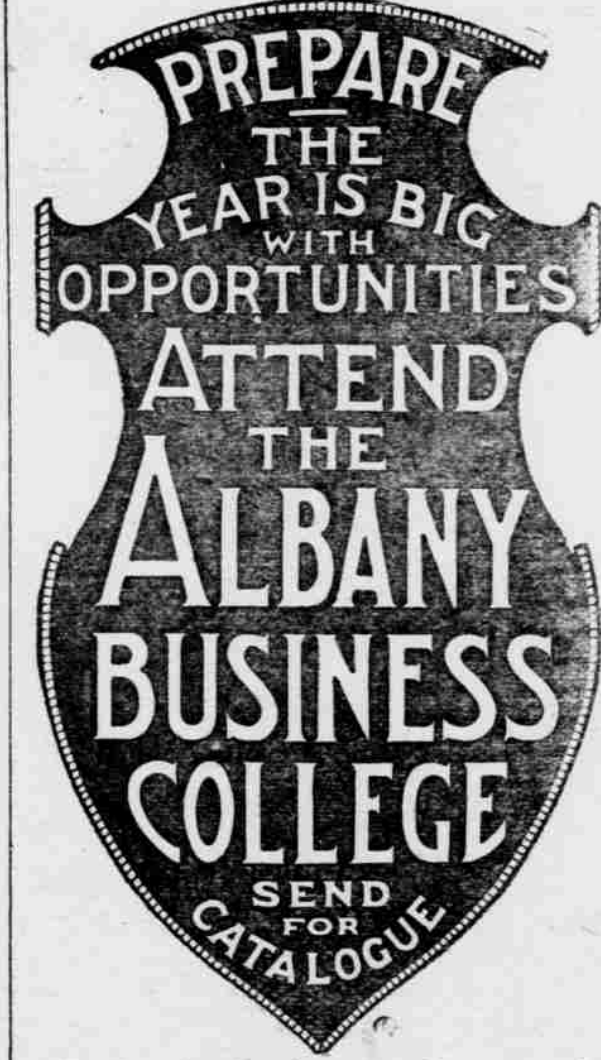
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The undersigned, having been appointed by the Honorable Probate Court for the District of Orleans, Commissioners, to receive, examine and adjust the claims and demands of all persons against the estate of Betsey E. Hunt late of Greensboro in said District, deceased, and all claims exhibited in offset thereto, hereby give notice that we will meet for the purpose aforesaid at the office of L. A. Jackson in the town of Greensboro in said District, on the 14th day of December and 31 day of May next, from 1 o'clock p. m. until 4 o'clock p. m. on each of said days and that six months from the 31 day of November A. D. 1916, is the time limited by said Court for said creditors to present their claims to us for examination and allowance.

Dated at Greensboro this 24th day of November, A. D. 1916.  
L. A. JACKSON  
A. E. TOLMAN  
Commissioners

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